

## TOIL AND TROUBLE

THE AVERAGE CONGRESSMAN'S LIFE IS NOT A HAPPY ONE.

His Constituents Often Make Him Weary. Yet He Can Do Little For Them—Claims and Requests of a Serious Nature—The Carlisle System.

[Special Correspondence.]

WASHINGTON, April 23.—The daily life of an average congressman is a curious compound of voting and talking, writing letters and running errands, figuring over statistics in his committee rooms and answering calls to the lobby, "shinning" the departments in the interests of his constituents and a score of other duties not even distantly alluded to in the constitution and the laws. There are a few members, it is true, and a very few, who daily refuse to do any of this extraneous work, who seldom go near the departments, who give strict orders to the doorkeepers that no notes are to be carried in to them during the sitting of their house and devote themselves exclusively to legislative labor. It is otherwise with the average member.



CONGRESSMAN BROOKSHIRE'S CORRESPONDENCE.

ing the sitting of their house and devote themselves exclusively to legislative labor. It is otherwise with the average member. One such with whom I happen to be best acquainted starts in at 8 o'clock every morning with a pile of high with letters and papers from his district containing marked passages, by which the editors desire to call his attention to special features in the situation. He tells from two to four hours writing such letters as are strictly confidential and then hastens to his typewriter at the capitol to do such writing as it is safe for other eyes to see, and every third day, at the least, he puts in every hour he can spare from the house sittings at looking through the departments and attending to the personal interests of constituents.

## Pointed Instructions.

And here is the first point to be noted on which there is a surprising amount of ignorance among people who have not visited Washington. Three-fourths of the letters plainly sent to the writer are received of the public offices in all one building like the county offices in a courthouse or at any rate grouped around some public square. They do not know that one visiting the various departments in their order by the shortest routes must travel about five miles. It is a very common thing to see in the letters such expressions as "next time you are at liberty for a few minutes please stop into the pension office," etc. "When you go to the capitol tomorrow, please stop at the treasury," etc. And sometimes the writer lays down with great emphasis what his member must say to the president. It goes without saying that just at present these instructions are particularly pointed, and from every section of the west and south come requests to "tell Cleveland that the people are awfully dissatisfied." "Tell the president that the people just exactly won't stand a tax on sugar." And sometimes, "Tell Grover that if he doesn't do something for the people his party won't save us in this county and district." The idea that any one of these members should feel at liberty to talk in that style to the president is sufficiently ludicrous without embellishment, but it is to be remembered that the average constituent believes his own congressman one of the great men of the country, and it is to be hoped that they write such things rather as a spur to congressmen than with any idea that the message will reach the president. It will probably surprise many well informed persons to learn that scores of congressmen never even see the president for months and scores of others never talk with him during the entire term.

## Difficulties in the Way.

There is another point on which there is almost universal ignorance, even among people who are supposed to be well posted, and that is the great reduction in the number of offices to be had by appointment and the great increase in the number entitled to claim them. The Democratic congressmen at present are laboring under extraordinary difficulties in procuring places for their constituents. In the first place, the civil service rules are now thoroughly enforced in all the departments, in the Indian service and the railway mail service, and that takes 40,000 offices out of the appointed classes. In the second place, several territories have recently been admitted to statehood, and in others, as the Democratic platform declares, the offices are to be filled by residents thereof. So all the territorial appointments are practically beyond the reach of congressmen.

The spirit of the civil service reform is also supposed to be working in all directions, and taking all these things together I think it a moderate estimate that there are today less than half as many offices available for congressional patronage as there were in the administrations of Grant and Hayes. Add to this that there are 214 Democrats in the house and 41 in the senate, and it will be apparent that the patronage of any one member is less than a third of what it formerly was. Nearly all the working members say the new system will be a great relief to them when it is fully established and understood by the people, but while it is being put in force and not yet comprehended by their constituents the results are embarrassing.

## The President and Civil Service Reform.

It is taken for granted that the senators control the entire foreign service, most of the internal revenue service and the customs appointments in all the large cities as well as all postoffices of the presidential rank. In fact, there is little or nothing left the average member except the country postoffices, and even as to them this is spoken of as a Mugwump administration. And here comes in one of the curious features of the present very curious regime. Mr. Cleveland is, to say the least, peculiar. It is evident that for awhile he holds to civil service reform principles with great tenacity, then the pressure on him grows too strong to be resisted. He gives way, and having once broken over the fence gallops recklessly through the old fields of Democratic and Jacksonian freedom in appointments. He then gets disgusted apparently and goes back to civil service strictness for a time.

In at least five great states the Democratic machine is against him, and his supporters are in a somewhat persecuted minority. Of course he must stand by them, as human nature, to say nothing of honor, would lead him to do, and this involves him in a rather undignified contest with senators. Another peculiarity of the man, if one may accept the testimony of leading Democratic members, is in his sudden and strong likes and dislikes. Very often he is seized with an admiration for a man at first sight and will give him any

office he wants regardless of congressional precedents, and just as often he conceives an aversion which cannot be overcome by any pressure. All these things give a curiously fluctuating and inconsistent appearance to his policy in making appointments.

## A Plan to Fix Responsibility.

Now the great question among congressmen is, What is to be done? Everybody agrees that the old system is not to be restored, for the country is too big, and the civil service reform principle is too well established, and the people wouldn't stand the change now. At the same time the present system is a great trial to members, as the people expect of them so much more than they are able to do. In view of all the difficulties several congressmen have conferred and thought out a plan by which, as they think, the principles of civil service reform could be better sustained and the congressmen made the responsible appointing powers.

What they propose is briefly as follows: All the 40,000 offices above mentioned are to remain as now, all other offices divided into two grades. All those below a certain rank, including all the postoffices in a district, except in the great cities, are to be absolutely at the disposal of the congressman of that district, and all those above that grade are to belong as of right to the senators. Where both senators are of the same party as the president an equal division is to be made, and where neither is to be continued. The senator or member having the appointment is to file a recommendation to be kept as a permanent record and to be considered as a continuing endorsement for the appointee. In case such appointee proves unworthy, the congressman is to be strictly responsible, not the president. It is to be assumed that the president knows only what has been told him of the appointee.

## The Carlisle System.

It is easy to conceive of the practical difficulties in the way of such a system, but it would certainly relieve both president and congressmen of many of their present embarrassments. The member would receive a notice that certain offices were at his disposal, and it would be his own loss if he did not fill them properly. Several congressmen say, however, that they are generally working men, and that they wish the whole thing could be taken out of their hands at once and forever, so they could say with authority to their constituents that they had no offices to give and so there was no use wasting time and stationery. How the appointees could be selected under such a system none of them can say, for it is evident that neither the president nor the heads of departments could know one in a hundred of the applicants. A southern member laughingly says that it will result in the general adoption of the Carlisle system, each cabinet officer looking out for his own state. It is alleged, I know not how truly, that natives of Kentucky, no matter what state they hail from, are the preferred candidates in the treasury department.

## Pathetic Appeals.

The average congressman's experience with applicants for pensions is at once amusing and pathetic. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kansas appear at present to be the states in which there are the most and the hungriest applicants. The member's spoke of has for years never had less than 200 letters per month, and sometimes 300, imploring him to see about applications, and, incredible as it may seem, he has never neglected a case. Very little indeed can any member do as the system now is, but he can give the applicant a clear and more specific statement of the condition of his claim and the needed proof than is found in the formal notifications of the department. The letters from widows are especially pathetic. They nearly always speak of their poverty and write with such sublime confidence in the member's ability to get the claim through that it is painful indeed to have to reply that nothing can be done.

## They are asked to speak at all sorts of meetings in aid of all sorts of moral movements, and many of them do. They are expected to patronize the state associations composed of government employees from their respective states. They are the honored guests at dinners or other social functions given by well to do residents from the respective states, and they are always invited to take a leading place in any movement.

## Embarassing Claims.

There is another class which is surprisingly large and often very annoying. In every congressional district, more especially in the rural regions, are old and wealthy families having great political influence, and to many of them the member is indebted for early political and professional support. Almost every such family has at least one scapegrace representative who wanders off, wastes his substance and turns up in Washington with the request for help on the grounds that his father or grandfather did so much for the congressman. And all these are but a few of the many drawbacks which prevent a congressman's life from being one of unalloyed happiness.

## J. H. READER.

## To the Best of His Recollection.

Critical Barber (feeling new customer's bristles)—Where did you get shaved last, sir?

Customer—On my face.—Chicago Tribune.

## Forced to It.

Doctor—Have you followed my advice in regard to eating plain food and keeping quiet at home?

Patient—That's all I've been able to do since you sent in your bill.—Yale Record.

## Jealous.

Waiter—Do you know, sir, that I envy that wingless of yours?

Diner—How is that, Thomas?

"You tip it so often, sir."—Yonkers Statesman.

## Reality.

He—Is that a love story you are reading?

She—No. "All the people in it are married."—Chicago Inter Ocean.

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